Mimulus Memo

California Native Plant Society
KERN CHAPTER

SEPTEMBER 2020

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EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

29 – Zoom Program, 12 pm

Connecting with Nature: The Saving Grace of Spring & Summer 2020

by Nancy Nies

A YEAR AGO, WE COULD NOT have imagined the changes that 2020 would bring to our lives. There have been some constants, however. In March, just as the coronavirus struck us here, we received our usual, wonderful spring gift from nature, thanks in part to late-spring rains. It was as if nature wanted to reassure us that although our world was going through an unprecedented crisis, all was not lost. We could count on our native wildflowers to bloom once again — here in Kern County and beyond — and to help us weather the instability and uncertainty of the months to come.

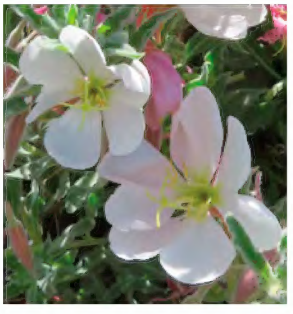
> This was a spring to commune with wildflowers, rather than people...

Photos by Nancy Nies

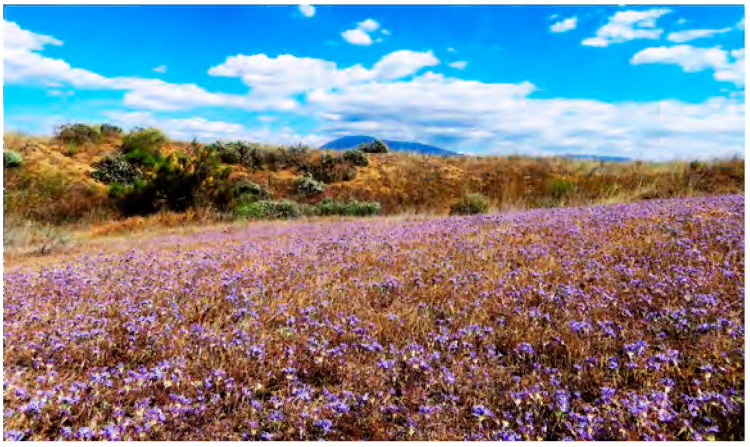
Wildflower display along Shell Creek Road on Earth Day — **22 April 2020**

This spring many Kern CNPS members, who had in the fall and winter tended native plants in their own gardens, enjoyed a changing display of beautiful blooms in exchange for their efforts. Other members ventured out to nearby — but remote and unpopulated — areas, where they could hike among the wildflowers, or simply stop the car occasionally to take a closer look. This was a spring to commune with wildflowers, rather than people, and perhaps to engage in creative pursuits that could further deepen our relationship with nature.

Oenothera californica (California evening primrose), along Kelso Valley Road — **6 May 2020**



Poet **Eloise Bruce**, in her article entitled "The Power of Poetry" (**Brain & Life** magazine, June-July 2020), says that writing poetry, for her and her husband, **David Keller**, has always been a



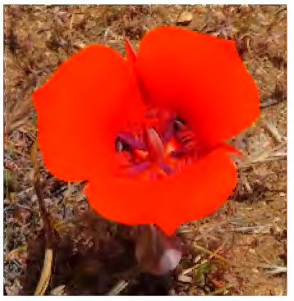
Eriastrum pluriflorum (star flower), Sand Ridge — **14 May 2020**

way to understand their world — a way *"to celebrate the joys and process the sorrows."* During their first months of living in a coronavirus-altered world, she writes, they found solace in nature and subject matter for their poems in the spring *"exploding"* around them. Kern CNPS member **Suzanne Weller**, whose poetry has appeared in the *Mimulus Memo*, can surely identify with them.

Another friend and Kern CNPS member, **Georgette Theotig**, has long found inspiration in nature for her art, which for her is a means of observing and appreciating the natural world. She always takes a sketchbook along on hikes and backpacking trips, to capture the beauty of California's mountains and meadows, lakes and rivers, trees and flowers. This spring, she said that seeing the wildflowers in bloom brought her joy, as well as hope for the future. Anything that can do that is always welcome, especially in the era of Covid-19.

Lasthenia sp. (goldfields) along Seven Mile Road, Carrizo Plain — **22 April 2020**

For amateur photographers like me, spring wildflowers provide the incentive for a hobby that helps me connect with nature and really focus on it — pun intended! Wildflowers also inspire me, with the assistance of **Shutterfly**, to make photo books and calendars — and, this year, even jigsaw puzzles. These projects let me experience the spring several times as I take the pictures, do the lay-out, and enjoy and share the finished product, while anticipating the flowers' return the following spring. This is all valuable at any time, but particularly so during a global pandemic. For me, this year, it has made all the difference.



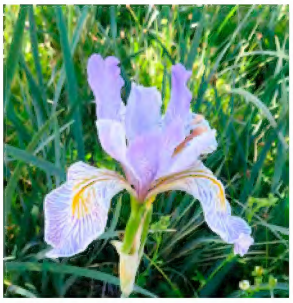
Calochortus kennedyi (desert mariposa), Pacific Crest Trail near Tehachapi — **16 May 2020**

Clarkia xantiana (gunsight clarkia), Lehigh Trail near Tehachapi — **12 June 2020**

Paul and I were among the Kern CNPS members who found joy and comfort in the beauty, variety and color of this year's display of spring and summer wildflowers at our doorstep — either literally, in our own gardens, or figuratively, within an hour or two of home. Accompanying this article are photos of a few of the many wildflower sightings that have been, for us, the highlights of the year.

Gentiana calycosa (Rainier pleated gentian), Bald Mountain area — **12 August 2020**

In his last book, **My Twenty-Five Years in Provence** (2018), **Peter Mayle** includes a number of photos taken by his wife **Jennie**, and describes one of them this way: *"Throughout Provence, sometimes in the most unlikely spots, you will come across magnificent displays that have not been planted, watered, arranged or primped into perfection. This huge field of poppies is a spectacular example. All too soon, the poppies will be gone. But they'll be back, to remind us of what nature can do if she's left alone to do it."*



Iris missouriensis (western blue flag), Mount Pinos — **10 July 2020**

Hulsea vestita (pumice alpinegold), Horseshoe Meadow — **5 August 2020**

The Summer 2020 issue of **Flora**, subtitled *"Summer Solace,"* is devoted to ways CNPS members are dealing with the pandemic's effects on our lives. Several articles deserve a mention here: *"Sheltering in Place with Native Plants,"* a photo essay from the **Sierra Nevada** chapter; *"A Time for Vigilance,"* a report on how Covid-19 is affecting conservation; *"An Abundance of Plant Art,"* a selection of native plant-inspired submissions to the **CNPS Art Challenge**; *"Picturing Climate Change,"* an article on a project involving high-resolution photos of herbarium specimens, which has drawn an increased number of volunteers during the current health crisis.

Last but perhaps most significant, *"The Right to Go Outside,"* is a story about an important part of CNPS' native-plant mission — to celebrate and reflect the diversity of California's people and plants, and to work to ensure that Californians of all backgrounds have access to nature. As Flora editor-in-chief **Liv O'Keefe** puts it, *"Every person on this planet is part of nature and deserves to feel that connection."* At no time has this been more important than in the era of Covid-19. Whether California's native plants inspire us to volunteer, garden, hike, write, draw, take pictures, or simply drink in their beauty, they can help us to get through these trying, troubling times and to envision the healing and renewal that will eventually follow. ✿

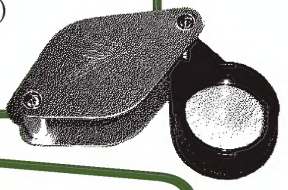
Eschscholzia californica (California poppy), Antelope Valley — **28 April 2020**

Chapter ZOOM Meetings

upcoming TOPICS

(All **in-person** chapter meetings have been suspended until further notice.)

Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2020 - Noon-1 pm
Kern CNPS Special **ZOOM** Program
Presenter: **Maria Jesus**
California Botanic Garden
Topic: ***Plants & Conservation of Conglomerate Mesa***
REGISTER for this event;
e-mail **Paul Gipe** (pgipe@igc.org)



Thank You to:

... **Denis Kearns** for sharing his garden and home nursery with us via Zoom.

... **Monica Tudor** and **Rich Spjut** for digging through years of stored material to find chapter records so it all can be placed in one repository.

...**Dorie Giragosian** for keeping Kern CNPS records safe for many years. ✿

California Native Plant Society

CNPS is the leader for providing reliable information on California native plants and plant conservation. Comprehensive information about California's flora and vegetation communities is available throughout the state for conservation and educational purposes. CNPS's leadership influences personal ethics and actions, as well as public policy for native plant protection.

ADOBE HOUSE

by Don Turkal

IN JUNE, **BILL COOPER**, CO-FOUNDER OF THE **Kern River Parkway Foundation**, asked **Kern CNPS** to make recommendations, additions, deletions, etc., to the **Kern River Parkway Plant List**. Bill's concerns were that the plants not be invasive, but be appropriate to the area. I forwarded Bill's request to our chapter president, **Richard Spjut,** who responded with a letter including a list of plants that occur naturally in Kern County with emphasis on the riparian and surrounding open woodland areas that would be suitable along the river.

I attended an **Adobe House Working Group** Zoom meeting. A few members asked about the types of plants we planned to use in the Adobe Native Plant Garden. I shared that Rich had prepared a list of plants and it had been submitted to Bill Cooper, a few other Kern CNPS members, and the landscape architect. I also mentioned that I had no idea, at this time, what plants would be chosen for the garden, but that they would be drought-tolerant.

The county was notified that the **Hart Park Adobe House** is eligible for listing in the **National Register of Historic Places**. Actual listing requires a separate and more rigorous process. Currently, the Adobe House is listed in the **California Register of Historical Resources** under 14 California Code of Regulations (CCR) Part 4851 (a) (1).

Stand by for future updates ✿

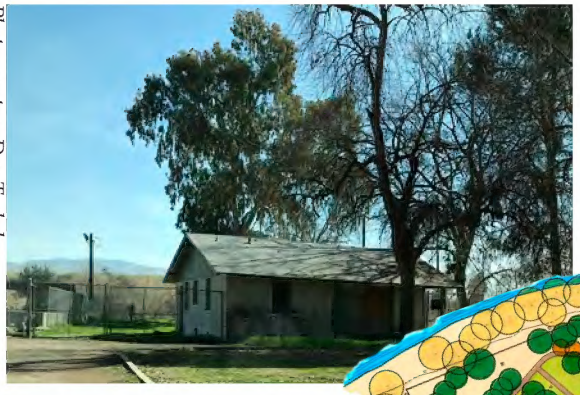


Photo courtesy Don Turkal

Above: Adobe House as it looks today.

Right: Plans for an Interpretive Center.

"I KNEW THAT"

by Yvonne Turkal

THIS COLUMN ABOUT EDIBLE PLANTS HAS a disclaimer: if you decide to investigate further, the information presented comes from **Edible and Useful Plants of California**, by Charlotte Bringle Clarke, Univ. of California Press, 1977. The Kern chapter of the California Native Plant Society isn't responsible for any of your results.

Looking for a native plant to share with you, I found the **California juniper**, *Juniperus californica* in the Cupressaceae family. This shrub is largely dioecious (produces cones of only one sex).

Photo courtesy Homer Edward Price

Spoiler alert: This isn't the species used in flavoring gin. (I can hear your fingers on Google).

We don't have them in our yard because they can grow to from 3 to 13 feet or more, and with our luck, our adopted juniper would end up the taller version. If you have the space, they do like drier climates and when their little feet are established you don't have to water them very often. I love the thought of low maintenance and not having to micro-manage their watering needs. There are already too many finicky plants.

Personally, I don't think they are one of the most attractive choices you could make for your yard; they hold a lot of dust due to the multiple angles of their branches and scalelike leaves.

If your new shrub begins to produce berries, usually in spring and summer, you COULD, repeat COULD, roast or dry them to eat in the winter as some Indian tribes did. Just between you and me, even if we had room for this shrub I wouldn't be canning the fruit for my winter meals. I would rather save the lovely berries for the animals to enjoy. I think they need them more than I do.

Yikes! It also suggests that to ward off a famine, the tribes would eat the bark. (Please don't try this at home). ✿

President's Message: The most appropriate plants for growing in our area

by Rich Spjut

RECENTLY I WAS ASKED BY OUR VICE-PRESIDENT, **Don Turkal**, to review plant lists he received from **Bill Cooper** for use in selecting native California species for planting along the **Kern River Parkway** and elsewhere. I recognized that most species listed were trees and shrubs. Although all were native to California, not all occur naturally in the San Joaquin Valley and nearby Sierra Nevada foothills. Examples are *Artemisia californica, Arctostaphylos densiflora, A. manzanita, Baccharis pilularis*, and others — perhaps numbering 60 species. I recall seeing these names at one time or another on lists of plants we provide at our chapter plant sales. This is in sharp contrast to more than 100 non-native species reported in **Shade and Ornamental Trees for Kern County Landscapes** by **John Karlik et al.** (2017, Univ. Calif., Agric. Nat. Res., Coop. Ext. Farm & Home Advisors). Additionally, I noted in correspondence on the subject of **Hart Park Bill Cooper** stated that they had managed to remove California coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) and palo verde (*Parkinsonia florida*).

In our chapter we had discussions about what species are appropriate for our plant sales in 2015 involving our board members and the CNPS horticulture staff in Sacramento. I expressed my concerns that California natives from outside our Bakersfield region, if grown in our area, could hybridize with our related species and/or spread into the foothills and beyond. Three examples follow.

California buckwheat

One is leafy **California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum* var. *foliolosum*)** reported by the late buckwheat taxonomist, **James Reveal**, in **Flora of North America 5(2), 300-01 (2005)** as *"being widely planted by the California Department of Transportation along roadsides, where it has hybridized with* E. cinereum." "*As a very unfortunate result, the distribution of var.* foliolosum *has now expanded into northern California (Alameda, Marin, San Francisco, Trinity, and likely other counties) and even into Oregon (Jackson County)." "In Arizona it has been introduced as a roadside plant in Maricopa County"*, from where it has escaped along a roadside in Graham County. **Twisselmann** reported it *"common in the northern Temblor Range where it occasionally reaches Kern County in the Annette region."* It has since spread east in the county, apparently in scattered occurrences as documented by my photographs of plants near Kernville, Old Kern Canyon Road east of Hobo Gulch (photo), Cuddy Valley (photo), and Tejon Ranch.

Brittlebush

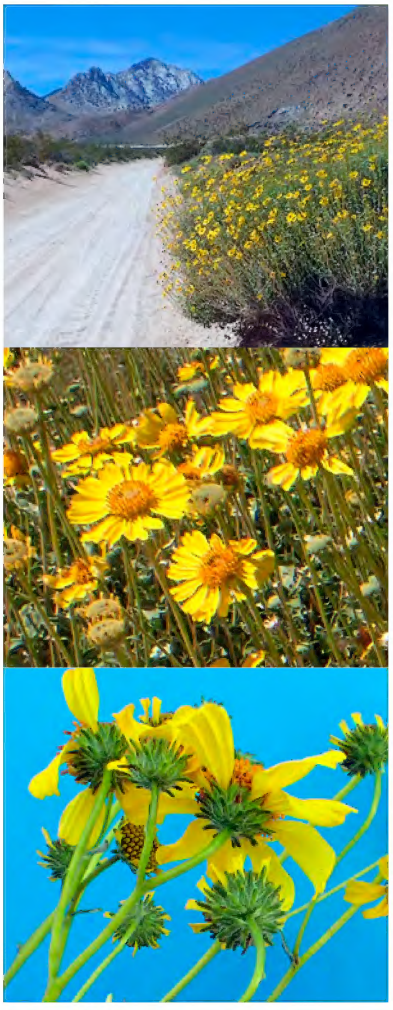
Another example is **brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*)**. It was among a list of species excluded by Twisselmann from his 1967 **Flora of Kern County**; i.e., to verify that it definitely did not occur in Kern County. Subsequently it did, however on Edwards Air Force Base, reported by **Maynard Moe** in his 1995 key to the Twisselmann flora, and later collected by **Naomi Fraga et al.** in 2004 from near *"Indian Wells Steak House and Brewery along state highway 14"* (CCH specimen). In February 2012, I photographed brittlebush near the junction of Highway 14 and Short Canyon track, and in September I reported — on the *Encelia* webpage entitled *Trees and Shrubs of Kern County* — that *"brittlebush has become relatively common along Hwy 14."* Since then I have shown its occurrence there to our participants on chapter field trips to Short Canyon in 2015 and in 2019. As noted on **Calscape:** *"It does well in cultivation and recently has spread dramatically in areas not natural to its distribution in large part because* ***Caltrans*** *has begun to use it in hydroseeding"* (report not dated).

Above: *Eriogonum fasciculatum* var. *foliolosum*, Cuddy Valley, CA **— June 26, 2012. Below:** close-up of plant along Old Kern Canyon Road, view looking down at widely spreading umbel branches that distinguish this variety from that of var. *polifolium* **— May 24, 2014**

Coyote Bush

A third example is **coyote bush (*Baccharis pilularis*)**, a species that I recommend not be sold at our plant sales. The species occurs mostly in the fog regions of coastal California, extending north to southern Washington and south to the coastal chaparral desert transition in Baja California. In California it may have naturally spread inland from the Bay Area into the northern part of the Great Valley. Many gardeners from southern to northern California have reported on the Internet that the species is invasive, replacing native herbs and grasses.

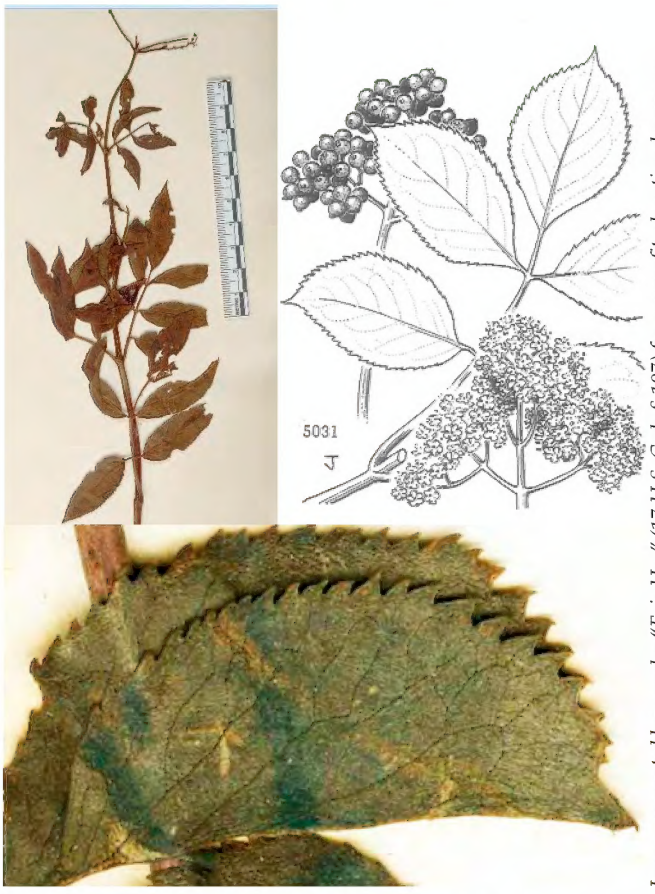
Further, others want to get rid of it, as reported by **J. Stackhouse, J. Davy,** and **E. Gornish**, in *Managing Baccharis "Coyote Brush,"* University of California



Top & center: *Encelia actoni*, Mojave Desert, Short Canyon with view of Owens Peak, CA, — **April 24, 2014**. **Bottom:** Close-up of *E. farinosa* showing branched flower scapes in contrast to unbranched in *E. actoni*, collected along frontage road to Hwy 14 and junction with Short Canyon **— April 24, 2014.**

Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Service, in a workshop series held in Eureka titled **Knocking out Noxious Weeds** (an Internet file power-point presentation, slides dated 12/13/16) showing various mechanical and herbicidal methods being used at Cape Mendocino. As noted in the **Manual of California Vegetation** (2nd ed., J.O. Sawyer, T. Keeler-Wolf, J.M. Evens, CNPS Publ. 2008): *"Stands of the* Baccharis pilularis *alliance may be either desirable or not, depending upon their geographical location and their species composition."* According to a recent **Fremontia**, large numbers of the plants were planted on private property in the Sierra Nevada foothills of Tulare County. This past December I noted coyote bush was among the labeled plants in small plastic pots spaced evenly in rows on the **Panorama Vista Preserve** in areas that had been cleared of vegetation.

In clearing vegetation one might assume, for example, that the native elder, *Sambucus nigra ssp. cerulea* — as described in the 2nd edition of **The Jepson Manual** as occurring in Kern County — would be of no concern since it reportedly is so widely distributed in the western U.S.; however, taxonomy of California plants continues to be revised. This might be expected for the elders since they lack phylogenetic studies. Two species in Abrams and Ferris (**Illus. Fl. Pac. States IV: 44**) — also recognized by Twisselmann — occur in Kern County, one a montane forest species in open ravines with a broad flat top inflorescence (*S. cerulea*), the other with a narrower dome-shaped inflorescence (*S. mexicana*) found at lower elevations in shaded woodland ravines and in the Valley wetlands. The latter includes many synonyms, two of which were species described from Kern County, *S. fimbriata* (Grapevine Canyon) and *S. velutina* (Poso Creek). A. Whittemore (2018, Bot. Res. Inst. Texas 20: 69–73), concluded that the type specimen for *S. mexicana*



Comparison of type specimens: upper **right:** illustration of *Sambucus mexicana* showing leaf with five leaflets (Abrams and Ferris, **Illust. Fl. Pac. States IV.** 1960)**; upper left:** type specimen (isolectotype) of *Sambucus mexicana* with seven leaflets (Tropicos web site, Missouri Botanical Garden, last accessed Aug 2020). **Lower Specimen:** Leaflet of type specimen of *S. orbiculata* (Smithsonian Institution, Department of Botany).

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was collected in Monterey, California — not Acapulco, Mexico. Abrams and Ferris, in their notes for *S. mexicana*, distinguished *S. velutina* by morphology (hairy leaves), ecology and geography (San Joaquin Valley), and also *S. orbiculata* from Santa Lucia Mts. in Monterey County, by orbicular leaflets. Additionally, I noted differences in leaf venation patterns among the elders in my contribution to the January 2016 *Mimulus Memo*.

One does not necessarily have to be a technical taxonomist to see differences. In conversations I have had with our plant sale coordinator, **Monica Tudor**, who often rides her horse on the **Panorama Vista Preserve**, she commented that the elder there is not the same as the one that she has growing in her yard. She remarked that the Panorama elder leaves thicken with age, in contrast to the two in her yard. Concerning planting elders, I have suggested that we obtain our plants from the nearest source. The Panorama Vista Preserve elder may be referred to as *S. velutina*, the epithet in regard to the twig

Comparison of *Sambucus* leaflet from plant on Mt. Abel compared with type specimen of *S. fimbriata*, (Smithsonian Institution, Department of Botany). Note the open dichotomous branched veins nearest margins, in contrast to the images on the preceding pages showing leaflet veins connecting to each other.

Sambucus mexicana specimen collected on Mt. Abel, June 30, 2016; leaves with fruit in background; leaflet veins forming dome-shaped areoles, close-up of leaflet in right image with blue marking to emphasize the "dome".

Sambucus cf. velutina at Panorama Vista Preserve – September 17, 2016, showing fruiting inflorescence (infructescence) without bluish bloom that is characteristic of *S. cerulea* ssp. *nigra*. Other plants at the preserve have sky blue fruits that turn shiny black at maturity. **Fred Chenowith** found a rare albino form that he brought to the taxonomy session for our November 2016 monthly chapter meeting.

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and leaf parts densely covered with hairs. As I indicated in the January 2016 *Mimulus Memo*, it was reported 60 years ago to occur commonly in the San Joaquin Valley. However, in a future taxonomic revision of *Sambucus*, it may turn out to be an endangered species in view of the expanding real-estate development and clearing of land that continues in our county. ✿

Virtual Field Trips
Pandemic – 2020

WHILE IN-PERSON FIELD TRIPS AND MEET-ings have been canceled for all CNPS chapters there's no need to forgo all the pleasure and educational value of field trips and presentations. There are virtual events from several chapters available to all of us. Below is a **sampling**. An updated list can be found by searching "*Virtual Native Plant Events*" on the CNPS website. (The hyperlinks below should work for you in the pdf version of this *Mimulus Memo*):

Upcoming Events

September 5-13 *California Biodiversity Day Celebration* – CNPS & Partners

September 12, 9 am - 12:30 pm *Advocacy Training Seminar* — CNPS Conservation Program Staff

September 12, 12 pm *Botanizing Nevada and Placer Counties* – Redbud Chapter

September 19, 12 pm *What Makes Native Gardening Special?* – Redbud Chapter

September 23, 7 pm *Rainwater Harvesting and Rainscaping Strategies for Healthy Watersheds* – Redbud Chapter

September 26, 1 pm *Shade Gardening with California Native Plants* – SF Library/Yerba Buena Chapter

Recorded Past Events

FLORA TOURS

27-Year Journey, Beauty and the Beast: California Wildflowers and Climate change – Yerba Buena Chapter

The Flora of Caspers Wilderness Park – Orange County and San Diego Chapter

Matt Berger: Death Valley – Botanizing High and Low – Santa Clara Valley Chapter

GARDENING/POLLINATORS

Gardening with Native Plants – Xerces Society

Plant ID for the Curious – by Bruce Homer-Smith – SCV Chapter

RESEARCH/CONSERVATION

New Calflora Tools for CNPS Users with Cynthia Powell – Mt. Lassen Chapter

Michael Viramontes on The Rare Sand Dunes of the Inland Empire – River and Lands Conservancy

Dudleya Conservation-In Vitro Propagation to Combat Plant Poaching and Extinction – SD Chapter

Juggling Jewelflowers with Justen Whittal, PhD – SCV Chapter ✿

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California Native Plant Society
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Inside this Issue:

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VIRTUAL MEETINGS & FIELD TRIPS
THE MOST APPROPRIATE PLANTS TO GROW IN OUR AREA

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The Kern Chapter of the
California Native Plant Society meets
the third Thursday of each month at:

California Native Plant Society

Kern County Superintendent of Schools
City Centre, Room 1A or 1B
1300 17th Street, Bakersfield, CA.
Chapter website: kern.cnps.org

The California Native Plant Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of California native plants and their natural habitats, and to increasing the understanding, appreciation, and horticultural use of native plants. CNPS has 31 chapters throughout the state and membership is open to all persons — professional and amateur — with an interest in California's native plants. Members have diverse interests including natural history, botany, ecology, conservation, photography, drawing, hiking and gardening. As a Kern County resident, your membership includes Fremontia, *a quarterly journal with articles on all aspects of native plants; the* Bulletin, *a statewide report of activities and schedules; and* The Mimulus Memo, *the newsletter of the Kern Chapter.*

Join CNPS or renew your membership online at www.cnps.org.
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